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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4162
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1974
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1839
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2410
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0861
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2784
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: GTZ LEGAL REFORM SEMNAR FEATURED ON
FRONT PAGE OF TURKMEN NEWSPAPER

REF: A. 07 ASHGABAT 1079

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0436

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The typical front page of the official Neutralniy Turkmenistan newspaper features the activities of President Berdimuhamedov, including Cabinet of Ministers' meetings and the president's meetings with foreign dignitaries. The front page of the August 15 edition of the paper also had an article on a seminar run by the German Organization for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and featured interviews with two of the project leaders. Eurasian legal reform experts from GTZ were in Ashgabat to help GTZ representatives here conduct a three-day seminar that began on August 13. Professor Rolf Knieper, a longtime interlocutor of the Turkmen government who has been directing GTZ's efforts to encourage the government to constructively revise its criminal code, criminal procedures code, and civil code, was a key consultant and participant in the seminar. Additional experts who participated in the seminar were Bremen Chief Court Justice Rudiger Tonnes, GTZ Project Manager Jens Deppe, and GTZ's Regional Coordinator for Turkmenistan, Hans Ulrich Im.

[1](#)3. (U) As noted in reftels, GTZ signed an MOU with the government in January that marked Turkmenistan's inclusion in GTZ's Support to Legal and Judicial Reforms in Central Asia program. Under the auspices of this program, GTZ is working with legal specialists from a variety of ministries via a series of seminars that seek to sensitize the Turkmen side to the areas of the national criminal and civil codes that need revision in order to bring them into conformance with international treaties and conventions to which Turkmenistan is a party.

[1](#)4. (SBU) This particular seminar's goal was to foster dialogue between the parties, and hopefully bring government representatives and international legal experts closer to finding common ground, so that the path to revising Turkmenistan's criminal codes leads to legislation much closer to established international standards. GTZ has

another seminar planned for September, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The seminar will focus on themes related to international, private and public law. GTZ also has programs underway that will focus on issues such as human capacity and regional water management. A seminar on international water management practices is already planned for the fall.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: It is a big deal that the state-controlled media so prominently featured this conference. It is not unusual for there to be articles on constitutional reform or other issues that quote Turkmen officials and praise the policies of the president. But even those articles tend to be inside the paper, rather than on the front page. This article is a first. It shows that the government feels there is real benefit to its cooperation with foreign partners in this area, and it is serious about attempting reform. END COMMENT.
CURRAN